

Panel discussion

Improving the contribution of Public Research Centres to the innovation system: Challenges and transformations

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Issues for the debate

Research centres are characterised by diversity. On the one hand, we have the classical public research institutes, some of them mission-oriented and some other doing generic basic and applied research in all fields. On the other hand, there are semi-public or semi-private institutions with the mission of developing technologies or industry-oriented research. More recently, many governments have promoted new research centres with a clear orientation to problem-solving, for example in the health area, or to priority areas in which they think they have national or regional capacities to compete globally. Finally, there are research centres in the context of universities, with more or less degree of institutional autonomy. All these types of research centres are diverse not only in terms of ownership (more or less public or private) but also as regards their funding sources, governance structures, management styles and the nature of their R&D products.

The panellists are proposed to address some of the following points:

- Challenges and opportunities for research centres in the context of current policy models
- The changing missions and outputs of the research centres and their relative orientation to users and markets
- Centres as policy tools: is the centres approach the most efficient means with which to affect scientific and technical outcomes and outputs?
- Relations of research centres with universities and other actors
- Management and human resources in research centres: is there a “best practice”?
- Market failure, mission, cooperation and excellence: what rationales for research centres as innovation tools?